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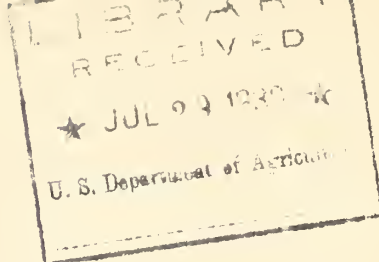


HOW TO READ LABELS

Health Foods

By

W. W. Vincent
Food and Drug Administration



We must consider Health Foods in a dual capacity. First, they are sold to you under the guise of food, but in reality they are offered as drugs. The Federal food and drugs act defines a drug in part as "Any substance, or mixture of substances, intended to be used for the cure, mitigation, or prevention of disease in either man or other animals." The definition for health, to quote from Webster's New International Dictionary, is "The state of being hale, sound or whole, in body, mind or soul; well being, especially a state of being free from physical disease or pain." It further defines "health" as "The power of conferring or restoring health." That's a pretty broad definition and a so-called Health Food enjoys some responsibility in fulfilling the obligation imposed upon it by that definition. In the enforcement of the food and drugs act we consider both the legal definition for drug and the dictionary definition for health. Therefore, those food commodities which make or bear reference to their health-giving properties must be classed as drugs.

The manufacturers have put a lot of the ordinary foods and some cattle food into the drug class. The American public has had offered in the past few years as Health Foods whole wheat, rye, oats, bran, and mixtures of them, cocoa, mineral waters, both natural and artificial, orange juice, crackers, bread, biscuits, cakes, candy, with added calcium, salt with added iodine, flour with added phosphates; chewing gum containing phenol-phthalein, a coal tar cathartic; and, lastly, crackers containing senna, cascara, or other laxative principle. Of these laxative ingredients the majority of labels made no mention, until your Food and Drug Agents either forced a declaration of same or required a change of formula in which they were omitted.

I regret that I cannot tell you that labels for the so-called Health Food products always tell the truth. The truth is, that manufacturers, ever alert to the fact the American public is "health conscious", are almost daily presenting some new product. These products are exploited under health claims and the labels frequently refer to vitamine content. The food authorities have been unable as yet to test for vitamine content the various foods and drugs on the American market. The testing of these products is a very slow and expensive process and it will not be possible to cover the field for some little time to come.

A vitamine development of interest is the irradiation of foods, that is, subjecting them to the rays of ultra-violet light. This imparts some Vitamine D qualities to those food products which contain a substance called Ergosterol. If you encounter the word "Irradiated" on a food label you will understand the product has been subjected to the rays of ultra-violet light.

Food products are being irradiated which contain no ergosterol and are not capable of being activated by that process. The mere fact that any

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particular food has been irradiated with ultra-violet light does not necessarily mean that it has thereby undergone any health-conferring change.

I was noticing one of these Health Food labels on a mixture of bran and figs. Prominent on the package was the word "Vitamized." There are six known vitamins, each performing a necessary body function, and a deficiency of any one will produce certain pathological conditions that are manifested by definite symptoms. From the word "Vitamized" one could assume that all the necessary vitamins had been added, or, again, only one or two. Don't you think a person ought to know what he is getting, be he threatened with Beri-Beri, Scurvy, or in need of that one which influences reproduction, better known as the anti-sterility vitamin?

Now, I expect to tell you about vitamins later. I have just mentioned them to show that it is difficult for the food authorities to keep pace with the manufacturers.

My friends, you know these slogans "Eat and Be Well," or "Eat Your Way to Health," or "Eat and Get Thin." They present an irresistible appeal to those who hanker for the better things offered by a bounteous country filled with enterprising manufacturers. These slogans appeal not only to the sick or ailing but likewise to the well. They represent modern advertising's contribution to the food merchandising field. Their acceptance literally, can not but hold disappointment for some of you. This applies to those foods the labels for which bear health claims when the most that can be said for them is, they are wholesome. I have no quarrel with the manufacturer of any proprietary food. All that I am asking is, do you as a consumer of their products know in what way your diet may be deficient? Will their product benefit you?

Let me illustrate. Numerous manufacturers have offered us bran, under various labels. Many promises of utmost benefit have been held forth, did we believe the label statements. As a matter of fact, the inclusion of bran in the regular diet of many of our citizens is not beneficial; rather it is detrimental. That is of no concern to those who would exploit it as a "Health Food" because as "Health Food" the manufacturer's net return was far greater than when sold as a cattle food. You may believe that I know whereof I speak, because from Government records I have just calculated that as "Health Food," bran, when computed to the ton basis, yielded one manufacturer \$190 as against \$40, when sacked for animal consumption. Comparison of the two products revealed little difference to the laboratory observer.

Many food manufacturers come to me with labels upon which they desire to claim health giving properties for their commodity. I always ask them, What do you want to do? Brand your product a medicine and limit its sale to the sick and ailing? Of course, they don't. They want distribution. The more ethical the manufacturer, the fewer claims you will find he is making for his product other than in regard to its palatability and wholesomeness. From that statement you may draw your own conclusions.

The Food and Drug Administration has no objection to a manufacturer calling his product wholesome, providing it is wholesome, but we are opposed to the misrepresentation offered by those who would exploit the public through having them believe it necessary to add something to our every day articles of diet.

There has not yet been introduced to the American public a so-called health food that was necessary to the conservation or maintenance of either our life or health. A relatively small percentage of our population is suffering from any disease we can attribute to diet deficiency. Comparatively few of us fail to get our adequate share of vitamins, provided we use a little discretion in our selection of foods. Don't rely upon "health giving" cereals, biscuits, waters, and so forth, as a panacea for your ills. You may need only a proper diet, together with exercise and sunshine.

Seriously, folks, the Food and Drug Administration feels that you should beware of "health foods" or other food products for which the manufacturers make excessive claims with respect to curative or health-giving properties. We also feel that under strict interpretation the word "Health," when appearing upon labels constitutes a misbranding under the provisions of the Food and Drugs Act. While there has not been a judicial determination of that point, the Supreme Court has already held that the Food and Drugs Act was enacted to enable purchasers to buy food for what it really is.

